

***Nexus: Exploring Friend Group Dynamics through Screenplay***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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## Abstract

The most marvelously crafted screenplay in the world is nothing if casted with bland, flat characters. Group dynamics are some of the most challenging, yet most important realistic qualities a writer must capture in her screenplay. In the college environment from which I have thrived in for the last four years, the study of friends and their roles within their groups balancing their personal lives with academia has surrounded me. *Nexus* attempts to take a magnifying glass to a fictional, traditional college friend group and determine what lies beneath its surface.

## Acknowledgments

I extend a massive thank you to my amazing thesis advisor, Kathryn S. Gardiner, for her guidance on my writing journey. Her expertise made the daunting task of crafting my first screenplay an engaging and enjoyable experience. I would also like to thank the friends who acted as the inspiration for my writing: Daley Wilhelm, Garrett Evers, and Lavonte Pugh, among others.

## Process Analysis Statement

The process of writing a feature length screenplay is unlike any other form of writing I have encountered before. Writing is a passion I have enjoyed for as long as I can remember. Once upon a time, I even wrote an 80,000-word novel over the course of several years. With a lengthy experience like that already under my belt, I figured writing a screenplay would not be much more difficult. But as the characters in my screenplay learn that the unexpected is always around the corner in college, I too, went through quite the growing experience during the writing experience.

Posing a deadline for myself was the first priority I took into consideration when preparing for my creative thesis. I wanted a first draft done before Thanksgiving break, giving myself about nine weeks to write a total of 90 pages. I commenced the preparatory work: I conjured up a few character mock ups for the four main characters, and even for some side characters. I wrote a synopsis and beat sheet, to ensure I would be on the right track with a structure. I then broke the schedule down even further, giving myself ten pages a week to write, and then dividing the workload to approximately two pages of writing a day. I did not fall off of my schedule even once, given that I was so committed to following a writer's schedule. And in those first nine weeks of school, I had a solid draft ready to go.

They say that writing is rewriting, and I found this to be ever so true in the case of *Nexus*. The problem I struggled with the most was structure. It became rather easy to write without stopping to think about where the story was going. Every line of dialogue, every single word of action, every scene heading needed to have a purpose—and this was something that took me a few weeks to grasp. By week seven or eight, the structure problems really started to arise, and that was where I had to balance the rewriting along with the construction of the new material. Nevertheless, I worked through my structure problems, tightened up a few scenes, added a few more lines for clarification, and had most of my problems solved. At one point, I found myself writing down the four major story points—the beginning, the inciting incident, the climax, the denouement—cutting them up, and rearranging them to see if that might help with story structure. And in fact, it did. The denouement ended up becoming my beginning. And suddenly, my structure problems were solved.

Crafting realistic characters with sensitivity in mind is something I was conscious about throughout the writing process. Three out of four of my main characters are persons of color. Too often in media, screenplays, and basically representation in general, stories lack representation. It was important to me that my main characters be relatable, and therefore, diverse. Early concerns of mine included thoughts about sensitivity and making sure I was representing my characters in a positive light, but I was simply assured by my thesis advisor that all I needed to do was write a story about characters first, and assign race later.

As is often the case with beginner screenwriters, formatting was also a frequent challenge of mine. I found myself having to frequently research the best possible way to depict something in the screenplay. After all, there are multiple ways to write anything in a screenplay format. My advisor and I would have talks about why either of us felt certain ways of writing were more

appropriate than others. When it comes down to it, comfortableness for the writer and clarity is what is most important.



Nexus

By

Courtney Tuchman

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - AFTERNOON

It's a packed high school graduation. Metal chairs are strategically arranged to accomodate families and guests, with the BLUE-CLAD GRADUATES sitting in the front few rows.

PRINCIPAL, middle-aged, stands behind a podium on a wide stage with various FACULTY MEMBERS behind him.

The audience finishes a round of CLAPPING.

PRINCIPAL

And now for the diplomas.

PRIYA and SAM, a pair of middle-aged Indian parents, sit up a little straighter amongst the crowd. They're the type of couple who is so similar they could be brother and sister.

PRINCIPAL (cont'd)

Leandre Abreo.

None of the graduates move.

PRINCIPAL (cont'd)

Leandre Abreo?

INT. STAIRCASE - SAME TIME

Four pairs of feet under blue graduation robes race down a staircase. Everyone wears dress shoes except for one pair of blocky platform boots.

An empty metal bowl is dropped and CLANKS down the staircase.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)

Leandre Abreo, last call?

INTERCUT BETWEEN GRADUATION AND THE GROUP

The bowl continues to CLANK down the stairs.

GRAYSON (O.S.)

Shit, shit, grab it, grab it.

The four BODIES scramble to find the bowl on the dark staircase. Two run into each other.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Ouch!

PRINCIPAL

Alright then, moving on. Karabi  
Anand?

Sam and Priya clasp each other's hands excitedly.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Amongst the silver, metallic kitchen appliances is a sign on the door that reads: "No teenagers allowed." Four teenagers bust in.

LEANDRE ABREO (18), an African-American lad, lets out a long holler as he floods in. He's holding a bunch of mixers and boxes of uncooked pasta in his hands.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)

Karabi Anand?

None of the graduates move from their chairs.

Hands still clasped, Priya and Sam's faces fall. Then they exchange a look; they expected this to happen.

PRINCIPAL

Seriously, what is going on?

Leandre dumps all of the materials on the counter.

LEANDRE

You guys I'm so glad we did this.

DARCY

Me too.

DARCY WEST (18), white, is a willowy hipster with plenty of tattoos and piercings to display. She's the one wearing the platform boots. She carefully separates the pasta from the cutlery.

GRAYSON HYDE (18) turns a knob on the stove. He is of a mixed race, with a bushy afro and glasses that slip down his nose. He clumsily pushes them back up.

GRAYSON

Dinner will be served shortly.

(CONTINUED)



There's a BUZZ from someone's smartphone. KARABI ANAND (18) reaches into her robes for her phone. She's an Indian young woman with impossibly long hair. She wears a signature red color of lipstick.

KARABI

It's my parents. They want to know where we are.

Grayson trots to Karabi's side and looks over her shoulder at her phone.

GRAYSON

Tell them the truth.

Karabi texts back.

KARABI

(slowly, as she texts)  
Last minute club affairs.

At Karabi's response, Sam and Priya roll their eyes.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL KITCHEN - LATER

A pot of pasta sauce bubbles next to a pot of nearly cooked penne noodles.

The four club members have already helped themselves and are eating their meal at a counter on paper plates.

DARCY

(chewing)  
I'm so glad we did this.

LEANDRE

I second that.

KARABI

I propose a toast.

GRAYSON

Let's do it.

They each routinely gather a few noodles onto their plastic forks and hover them above their plates.

KARABI

A toast to graduation.

(CONTINUED)



LEANDRE

Indeed.

KARABI

And to making sure that we stay  
friends in college.

Darcy puts an arm around Karabi.

DARCY

Easy. Done.

GRAYSON

Yeah, I don't think we have  
anything to worry about.

KARABI

(choking up)

I'm just so thankful that we're  
going on this next journey on our  
lives together. It would've been so  
scary to start college alone. I'm  
glad we're doing it together.

DARCY

Aww.

LEANDRE

No tears.

Karabi puts a hand on her chest to calm herself.

GRAYSON

Get to it so we can eat more.

KARABI

I know, I know. Screw it, I don't  
have anything else to say. Cheers.

DARCY/GRAYSON/LEANDRE

Cheers!

They "clink" forks and wolf down their noodles.

FADE TO BLACK

Karabi is crying.

FADE IN:

INT. KARABI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Laying down on her bed, Karabi sobs. The bed sheets are childish, like something out of a cartoon.

The door to her bare bedroom flies open. Priya and Sam stand at the doorway, concerned.

At the bed, Karabi hiccups.

SAM

Alright. You've had enough crying.

Karabi moans.

Sam gestures to his wife, an urgent sign that pleads with her to get their daughter out of bed.

Priya tugs on Karabi's legs.

PRIYA

Up and at 'em!

Karabi struggles against Priya's grasp, holding onto her bed frame for dear life.

KARABI

No, no, no!

Sam joins in the fight to get Karabi up, yanking on the girls' limbs.

SAM

Heave!

Karabi's parents tug on their daughter in unison.

SAM (cont'd)

Ho!

Another pull. Karabi flies off her bed with a scream.

INT. DARCY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

On a threadbare plaid bed sits BRANDON (18), a white dude bro, who proudly displays his letterman jacket.

Darcy confidently struts into the carpeted room. On her feet are the same big, bulky platform boots.

She JINGLES keys from her fingers. The two start to giggle simultaneously.

(CONTINUED)

Darcy climbs onto Brandon's lap and kisses him. Their MOUTH SOUNDS are unbearably gross.

BRANDON

I wish you didn't have to go.

DARCY

Me, too. But the time will fly, my sweet.

They lean in for another kiss.

RACHEL (O.S.)

Are you gonna leave yet so I can have your room?!

Darcy's little sister, RACHEL, a spunky middle-schooler, bounces onto the bed.

DARCY

Dammit, Rachel, this is still my room as long as I'm here!

RACHEL

Can I have it, can I have it, can I--

Darcy extracts herself from her boyfriend and shoves her sister out the room.

DARCY

Privacy, please!

Darcy SLAMS the door in Rachel's face.

INT. GRAYSON'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Grayson slams the door to his room and leans against it, out of breath. He grins, counting to himself silently.

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA (O.S.)

Grayson!

Grayson bites down on his finger, bending in half, trying to keep himself from laughing.

There's a gentle KNOCKING on Grayson's door.

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA (O.S.)

Dear grandson of mine, would you be so kind as to come out here for a moment?

(CONTINUED)



GRAYSON  
(struggling to hold composure)  
Sure!

Grayson opens the door.

Grayson's Grandpa, in his late sixties, stands with his arms folded, shirt soaking wet. He's got a great old man look, with suspenders barely holding up his pants around his gut and the sad, wispy remnants of an afro on his head.

GRAYSON  
(still struggling)  
What happened?

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA  
What happened is that I fell for  
the oldest trick in the book!  
Rubber band on the sink? I must be  
getting old.

GRAYSON  
What! Who could have done that to  
you?

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA  
I should've known better. I've  
become soft since you've gone off  
to college.

GRAYSON  
(falling apart at the seams)  
Grandpa, what are you talking  
about?

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA  
Come here, you!

Grayson's Grandpa hooks his arm around Grayson's neck,  
catching him in a stranglehold. Grayson laughs in delight.

Grayson's Grandpa suddenly shudders, coughing violently into  
his hand.

GRAYSON  
Jesus, Grandpa, still coughing?

Grayson's Grandpa takes a few mucus-filled breaths to calm  
himself.

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA  
Cold should be over soon.

(CONTINUED)



Grayson's Grandpa lets go of Grayson and dabs a handkerchief at his mouth.

GRAYSON

I feel bad about going back to school when you're still sick.

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA

Don't you dare feel bad about getting an education.

Grayson becomes solemn.

GRAYSON'S GRANDPA (cont'd)

I'll go find your parents. You gotta take off soon.

Grayson's Grandpa hobbles away.

Grayson whips out his phone and texts Leandre: "Still sick."

INT. LEANDRE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

A phone on a desk lights up with Grayson's incoming text.

Smooth and beautiful notes rings out from Leandre, playing the trumpet. His eyes are closed in concentration.

He cracks an eye open to peek at the text. He closes it again after reading it.

Leandre's bedroom is minimalistic, with classical sheet music layering the desk, the floor, the bed.

The song he's playing comes to a natural end.

Faint CLAPPING sounds come from behind his closed door.

LEANDRE'S MOM (O.S.)

Great job, son!

LEANDRE'S DAD (O.S.)

It gets more beautiful every time you play it.

Leandre sighs, expertly putting his trumpet down on the floor.

LEANDRE

Come in.

LEANDRE'S MOM and LEANDRE'S DAD flood in. They're a clean and well-put together couple. Maybe a little too pristine.

(CONTINUED)

DAD  
We gotta take off soon.

LEANDRE  
I'm aware.

MOM  
Do you want a snack for the road  
before we go?

Leandre looks like he wants to say yes.

LEANDRE  
That's okay.

MOM  
And why not? Aren't you hungry?  
You've barely eaten anything today.  
(to Dad)  
He's barely eaten anything today.

Leandre picks up his phone.

LEANDRE  
You're gonna make me wash my hands  
again for the millionth time.

Leandre texts back: "Sucks man."

Mom points at her son's phone.

MOM  
I read that smartphones are ten  
times dirtier than a toilet seat.

Leandre rolls his eyes.

LEANDRE  
I'm ready to leave, you guys go.  
I'll meet you outside.

Leandre's parents leave, with Mom giving him one more  
skeptical look.

Leandre gets an incoming text from Karabi: "Gonna need  
Spaghetti Club Night ASAP".

Leandre grins.



INT. CAR - SAME TIME

In the driver's seat, Priya is annoyed. Sam rubs his temples next to her.

Karabi sniffles in the backseat, wiping at her puffy eyes. She's still wearing that same color of red lipstick. Various duffel bags box her in.

PRIYA

Bachcha, haven't you had a nice, long fall break? Why are you so upset.

KARABI

Because I miss you guys!

PRIYA

We're right here, we are still in your presence.

KARABI

I already miss you, anyway.

Karabi's phone, on her lap, lights up with a text from Leandre: "You should become a pastafarian."

Another one floods in. Darcy has chimed in to the group text: "I agree."

A thumbs-up comes in from Grayson.

Karabi gives a little chuckles through her tears.

INT. CAR - LATER

The Anand car pulls up to a curb.

Karabi dabs at her face and takes calming breaths. She puts on a believable smile and opens the car door.

A perky RA approaches. She's a senior who's embraced the college dorm lifestyle for a bit too long.

RA

Need help with your bags?

## INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Karabi unzips one of her bags in the somewhat put-together room. Karabi's half is colorful and modest, with plenty of sentimental objects she's hoarded.

Her roommate's half of the room is perplexingly opposite, set up like a 90's grunge music video. There are punk rock band posters hanging over the bed.

CUT TO:

The Anand family hauls in duffel bags.

CUT TO:

All of Karabi's plentiful bags are in the room. Karabi gives her parents a tearful hug goodbye.

CUT TO:

## INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Karabi plops on her bed. Karabi's finished unpacking, with her bags stuffed under her bed.

Karabi looks longingly at the empty bed across the way. She puts her head in her hands and gives away to her tears.

TITLE CARD: NEXUS

## INT. ART CLASS - DAY

Motivational art posters, easels, and reserves of paint line the walls. Chairs are set up in a circle in the middle of the classroom.

Various ART STUDENTS take their stances at the easels. Each one paints a nature scene.

Karabi stands at an easel near the front of the classroom, painting something that looks like a storm cloud. The rings around her eyes match the color of the storm.

She gives a lazy turn of her head to the empty easel next to her. She paints a single gray streak of contempt across the blank page.

Platform boots HIT the ground. Darcy materializes next to her, looming at least a foot taller. Karabi doesn't seem to be surprised.

(CONTINUED)



Darcy points to the gray streak on her easel.

DARCY

Thanks. This accurately represents  
my emotions right now.

KARABI

Any time.

Darcy tears the page from the easel, CRUMPLING it and  
tossing it behind her.

KARABI (cont'd)

Where were you last night? And why  
are you so late?

DARCY

I couldn't tear myself away from  
Brandon. I was supposed to just  
drop him off in East Lansing first  
but then I just stayed the night  
with him. I just got back.

KARABI

Course.

Karabi scribbles a few lines onto her painting.

DARCY

What? I'm here now, aren't I,  
darling? What happened?

KARABI

Just...really homesick.

DARCY

Still?

Karabi meets Darcy's gaze, annoyed. Darcy just doesn't get  
it.

DARCY (cont'd)

I miss my boyfriend, but you don't  
see me moping and doping about it  
all the time.

KARABI

Thanks.

Karabi makes a couple of more strokes on her painting.

INT. HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Chalk STRIKES the blackboard. It reads "History 100."

MAN (O.S.)  
History of North America!

The MAN (49) wears suspenders and sports an unpleasant mustache. He's way too enthusiastic about this class, as he uses wide gestures and talks too excitedly.

Karabi, in the middle of the standard classroom, snickers into her notebook at Man's antics. Leandre, head on his desk, sleeps next to her.

MAN  
Let's get the boring stuff out of  
the way first and do roll call,  
shall we?

Man holds out some papers in front of his face, squinting.

MAN (cont'd)  
Let's see here. Leandre Abe-ree-oh?

Leandre's head remains down.

LEANDRE  
Ah-bray-oh. It's French.

MAN  
Shoot, I always mess that up, don't  
I?

LEANDRE  
Yep.

Leandre raises his head.

LEANDRE  
(whispers to Karabi)  
You'd think one would learn,  
halfway through the semester.

Karabi giggles. Leandre leans back in his chair, eyes hardly open.

MAN  
I bet you get a lot of people  
stumbling over that.

(CONTINUED)

LEANDRE  
(sarcastic)  
Oh, you'd be surprised.

Man returns to his list.

MAN  
Thank you, Leandre. Alright, next.  
Karabi Ay-nand?

KARABI  
Oh my God, it's Ah-nahnd.

MAN  
I'm not so good with names, folks!

Karabi meets Leandre's eyes and they smile knowingly at each other.

KARABI (V.O.)  
It just...sort of feels like a  
prison here.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Karabi sits at her decorated desk, video chatting with MALA BROOKER (27).

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

Mala is an older, slightly wider version of Karabi. She's standing up, showing off her pregnant belly.

MALA  
Why do you say that?

Mala rubs her belly, making Karabi smile.

KARABI  
You're so big now.

MALA  
You didn't answer the question.

KARABI  
I don't know...

MALA  
College is the exact opposite of a  
prison, hon.

(CONTINUED)



KARABI

I know, but...I don't have any new friends, I don't have a car. I can't go anywhere. I'm missing out on so much back home.

MALA

You're not missing anything.

Mala rubs her belly again. Karabi raises her eyebrows as if to say, "See?"

MALA

Exactly my point. You'll be home for Thanksgiving, just in time for my due date. There's not a lot you can do watching me sit around and complain about my back pain.

Karabi fiddles with a pen on her desk.

MALA

College is liberating. Enjoy it. And it hasn't even been a full semester. You'll make new friends. But meanwhile, you've got all your high school buds to hang out. That's nice, right?

KARABI

Of course it is...

MALA

You given any more thought about sorority rushing like I told you to?

Karabi shushes her sister and points behind her.

Darcy, with earbuds in her ears, is studying a textbook on her bed behind Karabi.

KARABI

We'll talk about it later.

MALA

Okay.

KARABI

I love you, Mally.

(CONTINUED)



MALA

Love you too, bumble bee.

Karabi hits the end button on the video call. She closes her laptop and sniffles, the tears coming on again.

DARCY

Hey!

Darcy jiggles on top of her bed, her legs swinging back and forth.

Karabi wipes at her face and turns in her chair to look at her.

KARABI

What?

DARCY

Quit crying!

KARABI

I can't.

DARCY

It's easy. Watch.

Darcy puts on an overexaggerated frown, waves a hand in front of her own face, and then smiles.

DARCY (cont'd)

See?

Karabi regards her friend nonchalantly.

DARCY

Let's go to a party this weekend.

KARABI

A party?

DARCY

Yeah, we haven't been to one since high school. Jason from our art class invited me after class today.

KARABI

I don't think so.

DARCY

Why not? It'll cheer you up.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Parties are boring.

DARCY

High school parties are boring. But we're in college now, baby! The Spaghetti Club is bound to tear this place up!

Karabi picks at her thumbnail.

KARABI

I guess we can all be terrified freshmen together.

DARCY

That's the spirit!

KARABI

And who wouldn't want to disappoint Jason from art class?

DARCY

I whole heartedly agree. At least I think that was his name?

Karabi giggles and knocks a fist on Darcy's forehead.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

KITCHEN

It's a classic party set up. Beer bottles in hand, underage drinking, and plenty of WILD KIDS packed into a too small house.

Karabi, carrying two untouched beer bottles, is squished into a wall as some JOCKS run past her.

She walks into the

LIVING ROOM

Darcy appears calm and collected standing against the party's backdrop.

Karabi trips on her way over.

DARCY

Having fun, yet?

Karabi composes herself and hands the spare beer to Darcy.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Not really.

DARCY

I know, right? This so isn't my scene. Brandon would love it, though.

Karabi turns to the side and makes a gagging gesture, so Darcy can't see it.

Something catches Karabi's eye in the corner of the room.

KARABI

Oh, look! It's the boys!

Leandre and Grayson are dancing in the corner. Leandre shuffles from side-to-side, but Grayson is going all out. His arms and legs move in jagged, unprojected paths.

KARABI (cont'd)

Leandre!

The boys can't seem to hear her over the music.

KARABI (cont'd)

Spaghetti Club friends!

That got their attention. The boys' dancing slows. They wave and start to make their way over.

DARCY

I wouldn't scream Spaghetti Club friends at the top of my lungs at a party if you want to be cool in college.

KARABI

Luckily, I don't care.

Karabi puts an arm around either guys' neck and hugs them.

KARABI (cont'd)

Friends!

Karabi lets go. They hug Darcy in return. She holds her beer carefully in one hand as she hugs back.

DARCY

Friends.

Grayson and Leandre hug each other.

(CONTINUED)



GRAYSON  
(faking tears)  
Life partner.

LEANDRE  
Love of my life!

DARCY  
Aw, so cute! I always assumed.

Grayson and Leandre break apart, laughing off Darcy's joke.

KARABI  
I missed you guys over the break.  
It sucks we couldn't get together.

GRAYSON  
Yeah. It was crazy busy with my  
parents and stuff. But there's  
always Thanksgiving break!

KARABI  
When I'm not auntie-ing, yes.

GRAYSON  
Oh, yeah! Is Mala--

DARCY  
Why are you guys beerless?

LEANDRE  
You know we don't drink.

DARCY  
Come on. That was high school  
Grayson and Leandre. Live a little!

GRAYSON  
Oh, I'm living.

Grayson launches into his angular dance moves again. Karabi cheers him on.

Darcy sets her beer on the nearest table.

DARCY  
I wonder how many people here are  
just holding beers and pretending  
to be cool.

LEANDRE  
Probably more than we think.

(CONTINUED)

GRAYSON

I vote we ditch this place for  
Spaghetti Club.

Karabi raises her hand.

KARABI

I agree!

Darcy playfully rolls her eyes.

INT. DORM KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is small and cramped with outdated, yellow  
couches pushed against the walls.

Karabi, Darcy, Grayson, and Leandre sit in a circle on the  
floor, eating spaghetti off of paper plates with plastic  
forks.

DARCY

I can't believe we're still doing  
this.

Karabi twirls the pasta around her fork, intently.

DARCY

I thought college was about moving  
on.

GRAYSON

We are moving on.

LEANDRE

We mixed in red pepper flakes to  
the sauce this time. We're being  
very bold tonight.

KARABI

I think you guys have outdone  
yourselves tonight.

GRAYSON

Thank you.

KARABI

Please keep this fine blend in mind  
for my birthday party.

LEANDRE

Oh yeah, that's coming up.

(CONTINUED)

DARCY

I can't believe you're gonna be nineteen.

KARABI

Well, you guys won't be far behind.

There's a BUZZ. Darcy retrieves her phone from her back pocket.

DARCY

Yeah, but--

Darcy interrupts herself, her thumbs moving across her phone as she texts.

KARABI

Brandon?

Still grinning at the phone, Darcy nods.

Grayson and Leandre share a look. Karabi catches the exchange and she points at Darcy.

Grayson shakes his head.

Karabi points again, more insistently.

GRAYSON

Don't you dare.

Darcy puts her phone down.

DARCY

Don't you dare, what?

Karabi wiggles her eyebrows at Grayson. Leandre buries himself in his food.

GRAYSON

Don't you dare be any less happy than you are with your significant other ever, friend.

Grayson stabs his pasta. Karabi gives him an indiscrete thumbs-up.

DARCY

I just haven't heard very much from him since we both moved out. The break was nice, but he's only sent me five texts today.

(CONTINUED)



LEANDRE  
(sarcastic)  
Oh no.

KARABI  
Long distance relationships can be  
hard.

Grayson coughs into his hand.

GRAYSON  
(coughing, under his breath)  
It's only an hour away.

DARCY  
You don't even know, girl.  
Especially after living together.

Karabi shakes her head in disbelief.

KARABI  
I still can't believe Mama West  
said yes to that.

Darcy shoves Karabi's shoulder.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Ow.

DARCY  
Shut up.

Darcy clumsily steals a noodle off of Karabi's plate.

KARABI  
Can I help you?

DARCY  
I've been helped.

Darcy slurps the noodle up.

GRAYSON  
I bet that's what every day living  
with Brandon was like.

Darcy throws her plate down.

DARCY  
Can you not?

Leandre and Grayson snicker together.

(CONTINUED)

DARCY (cont'd)  
Is that too much to ask?

GRAYSON  
Yes.

As the friends bicker, Karabi grows quiet.

KARABI  
I'm thinking of sorority rushing.  
The group silences. Darcy laughs in disbelief.

DARCY  
Ew, why?

KARABI  
My sister did it in college and she seemed to have a good time. She thinks I'd like it. Maybe meet some new people.

Darcy looks to Grayson and Leandre for help.

KARABI (cont'd)  
What?

DARCY  
You don't need that much estrogen. And it's stupid to buy your friends when you already have some. I have enough personality to fit ten sorority girls in me. That's ten for one, a bargain.

Karabi smirks but gives each person a lookover. Maybe these guys have ultimate friend potential. Maybe she doesn't need new, fancy college friends.

KARABI  
I'll think about it.

Karabi holds a fork full of noodles out in the center of the group.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Cheers?

Everyone else gathers up their pasta onto their forks.

DARCY  
To?

(CONTINUED)



KARABI  
Our everlasting friendship?

Darcy shrugs. The plastic cutlery meets in the middle.

KARABI/DARCY/GRAYSON/LEANDRE  
Cheers!

MONTAGE - GROUP BONDING

-- The four friends walk down a campus sidewalk together, chatting and laughing MOS.

-- Darcy and Karabi are painting in their art class. Karabi is working on a serene landscape while Darcy crafts something straight out of Dante's Inferno.

-- The four friends are watching a movie together in a darkened theater. Grayson seems to be watching Darcy rather than the movie.

-- Karabi speaks to a REPRESENTATIVE outside of a sorority house, MOS. Karabi appears eager to join.

-- In Karabi's dorm room, Darcy video chats with her boyfriend MOS while Karabi awaits the conversation to be over, a textbook open on her lap.

-- Brandon waits outside of his car. Darcy runs out from the dorm and leaps into his open arms.

INT. GRAYSON AND LEANDRE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

It's much messier than the girls' room. Beds aren't made, walls are bare, trash is overflowing.

Karabi, Grayson, and Leandre sit scattered throughout. Karabi and Leandre have their noses in notebooks, but Grayson stares at the wall, lost in thought.

KARABI  
I miss Darcy.

GRAYSON  
Same.

Leandre peeks at Grayson over the top of his notebook.

Grayson abruptly SHUTS his notebook closed and scrambles to Karabi's side.

(CONTINUED)



KARABI

Can I help you?

Grayson rubs his hands together thoughtfully.

GRAYSON

You know Darcy better than anyone else, right?

KARABI

I guess so?

GRAYSON

I see, I see. And what say you, hypothetically, is there a chance she will ever break up with Brandon?

Karabi snorts.

GRAYSON (cont'd)

What?

KARABI

That girl has been obsessed with him ever since she met him at school.

GRAYSON

I know, but we're in college now and--

Karabi shifts to face Grayson full-on.

KARABI

i'm surprised, Grayson Hyde! Do you have a crush on Darcy?

GRAYSON

So she doesn't like me.

Karabi shakes her head, attempting to be sensitive to his feelings.

GRAYSON (cont'd)

And you're sure about that?

Another careful nod from Karabi.

Grayson clamps her shoulder and moves back to his belongings.

(CONTINUED)

GRAYSON (cont'd)  
(disappointed)  
Thanks for the honesty.

A BUZZ. Karabi goes for her phone.

KARABI  
Well, I'll be.

Karabi holds out her phone for Grayson and Leandre to see.

It's a text from Darcy: "Greetings from middle of nowhere America!" Attached is a picture of her kissing Brandon on the cheek.

After viewing the phone, Leandre goes back to his work, but Grayson shakes his head.

GRAYSON  
I don't get it.

Karabi slouches, folding her arms around herself. She looks smaller.

LEANDRE  
It's a lost cause, man. They've  
been together for years.

GRAYSON  
Everyone else has broken up with  
their high school significant  
others by now. I just don't get it.

The three try to go back to their books, but Grayson can't focus.

GRAYSON (cont'd)  
It's just that she's so cool, you  
know? Like, she has everything  
going for her and she just wants to  
settle for...whatever that guy is.

KARABI  
(softly)  
An ex-football star.

Grayson groans and throws his head on top of his book.

LEANDRE  
There are plenty of other girls.

(CONTINUED)



KARABI

I agree.

Grayson holds Karabi's gaze for a second.

LEANDRE

What about Audri?

KARABI

Ooh, who's Audri?

GRAYSON

She's in my calculus class...I mean, she's cute but...

LEANDRE

She ain't no Darcy.

Karabi's eyes go downcast. BUZZ.

Another text from Darcy: "Please tell me that we're the cutest."

Karabi puffs her cheeks out, huffing.

INT. ART CLASS - DAY

The students are painting at their easels. Karabi works on a more completed version of her landscape painting.

She sneaks a look at the empty easel across from her. Then another look at the door. No one walks through.

Darcy's absent.

Karabi goes back to her painting. Her brush slips and streaks an unwanted mark.

KARABI

Damn everything.

She licks her thumb to try and smear the paint off.

Platform boots CLICK. Suddenly, Darcy is at her easel. She's out of breath, uncomposed. She's not wearing her usual face of makeup and her eyes look puffy.

KARABI (cont'd)

Hey!

Darcy sighs behind her easel.

(CONTINUED)



KARABI (cont'd)  
You're way late again.

Darcy dips her paintbrush into her paint, but can't bring herself to lift it back up.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Let me guess. You were busy gettin'  
it on with Brandon?

A beat. Darcy's paintbrush falls on the floor.

KARABI (cont'd)  
So...good weekend? Or...?

Tears flood Darcy's eyes.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Karabi and Darcy sit on Darcy's bed. Darcy cries on Karabi's shoulder. Karabi rubs Darcy's arm sympathetically.

KARABI  
I thought you guys were having a  
good weekend.

DARCY  
I did, too! Apparently it was just  
his last hoorah.

KARABI  
What a jerk.

DARCY  
He said I was holding him back. He  
said he needed to let go of high  
school and our hometown and I  
wasn't letting him do that. He  
wants to get more involved with his  
stupid fraternity.

Karabi shifts a bit in her seat.

DARCY (cont'd)  
Of course he wants to get more  
involved. He has to play the field  
and indulge in whatever more  
college stereotypes he could  
possibly think of.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Well, maybe you can try to do the same. Use this to your advantage.

Darcy peels herself off of Karabi's shoulder. Eyeliner runs down Darcy's cheeks.

DARCY

Excuse me?

KARABI

Maybe now you can open yourself up to more college stuff. Join a club. Go to a basketball game. I don't know, but just so you can get a little more involved.

Darcy runs her fingers through her unkept hair.

DARCY

What is it with you and the college experience? No one else is interested in that stuff. I was already happy. I already had you and the rest of the crew. I thought Brandon and I were settled.

Karabi twists her body to fully face Darcy.

KARABI

At age eighteen, love?

DARCY

You don't get it. I believe in being with someone for years and years and years.

KARABI

I mean, I do, too. But you're still young. I don't think you really have to settle down, yet.

DARCY

Don't you get it? I can't start over now.

Darcy folds in half, tears starting anew. Karabi pats her back, but her eyebrows are knit together in confusion.



INT. GRAYSON AND LEANDRE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Grayson and Leandre sit at their respective desks, opposite each other. A clock TICKS on the wall.

Grayson smiles. Leandre dares a look over his shoulder.

LEANDRE

Now's your chance, son.

Grayson keeps his gaze forward.

GRAYSON

Why, I don't know what you're talking about.

Leandre turns back in his chair, satisfied. Grayson picks up his phone.

Grayson taps Darcy's name in his contacts. He's about to hit the call button when his phone BUZZES. The Caller ID reads "Dad".

Grayson's joyful mood evaporates. He brings the phone to his ear.

GRAYSON (cont'd)

Dad?

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Karabi sits at her desk, knees pulled to her chest, phone at her ear.

KARABI

What?!

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME TIME

An exhausted Priya sits in a hospital waiting room, with a concerned Sam next to her, clasping her hands.

PRIYA

Mala had the baby.

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

KARABI

But it's two and a half months early!

(CONTINUED)



PRIYA

We know, bachcha, we know.

Karabi stands from her chair, pacing.

KARABI

When did she go into labor?

PRIYA

Last night.

KARABI

Why didn't you tell me?!

PRIYA

Because we knew you were already stressed, and we didn't want to make it any worse.

KARABI

Well now it's worse! This is so much worse!

Sam rubs Priya's shoulders.

PRIYA

We know you're upset. But Mala is okay now.

KARABI

Now?! Meaning she wasn't before?

PRIYA

Well, she lost a lot of blood.

Karabi bites her lip and starts to cry.

PRIYA

But both she and the baby are doing fine now. The baby will have to be incubated for about six weeks. And Mala will be in the hospital for a while, too. But everything will be okay.

Karabi stops pacing.

KARABI

Why wasn't I there?

PRIYA

It's not your fault, Karabi. Not even a little bit.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI  
(whispers)  
I should have been there.

Karabi hangs up. The resulting screen on her phone reveals she'd missed several calls from her mom.

INT. DINING HALL - AFTERNOON

Students are overflowing, crammed onto couches and in between tables, eating. The room is bustling. But the gang is somber.

The four friends sit at a table with trays of food out in front of them. Karabi, Darcy, and Grayson eat sluggishly.

Leandre sighs.

LEANDRE  
I have a really tough music test  
coming up later this week.

No one makes eye contact with Leandre.

Darcy scrolls through photos of her ex-boyfriend on Instagram.

LEANDRE (cont'd)  
It might make or break my term.

Grayson stares blankly, scratching his arm. Karabi stares into her soup like it's an empty void.

LEANDRE (cont'd)  
You know, I think I should just  
transfer schools.

Karabi stirs from her trance.

KARABI  
What?

LEANDRE  
What's with everyone?

Darcy turns her phone off, slamming it on the table.

DARCY  
I agree. You know, what's with  
everyone? Why aren't people there  
for you when they said they'll be  
there for you. Why, when they said  
they're all in?

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Darcy...

DARCY

Everyone sucks. Brandon sucks. I hate him.

KARABI

You know I'm there for you.

GRAYSON

Me, too.

Grayson stares down the drink in front of him.

Darcy gathers up her belongings.

DARCY

I don't need your pathetic crush right now, Grayson. I super don't.

She clumsily fumbles with her tray and trots off.

Grayson sits, stunned. Leandre clamps a hand on Grayson's shoulder.

LEANDRE

Hey--

Grayson flinches and shakes off the gesture.

Karabi leans forward.

KARABI

What happened?

Grayson points behind his shoulder.

KARABI (cont'd)

No, like. What happened, what happened?

Grayson scratches his arm.

KARABI (cont'd)

I'm here for you, too.

Grayson smiles sadly.

KARABI (cont'd)

Like...whatever you need.

Leandre studies Karabi, curiously.



INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Karabi's laying on her bed, her frizzy bed-head mane draped over one shoulder.

A text to Grayson: "Are you okay?" The time stamp reveals it was sent the night before. There was never a response.

Karabi switches over to the Facebook app and taps on Grayson's profile picture.

Karabi smiles.

CUT TO:

LATER

Karabi checks the calendar on her bulletin board. "SORORITY RUSH DAY - 10:30 " is written in big letters on the current day, September 1st. She flicks the box with her index finger.

INT. DORM BATHROOM - MORNING

Karabi stares at herself in front of a mirror against a relatively clean, large bathroom. Stalls of toilets line up behind her. Her personal makeup items litter the sink.

Karabi has caked on the makeup, her signature red lipstick still standing out the most. She's got a curling iron in one hand, twirling the finishing touches into her hair.

BUZZ.

A text from Darcy: "URGENT. PLEASE COME BACK."

Karabi exits out of the text to look at the time. It's nearly 10 AM.

She sighs.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Darcy and Karabi sit upright on Darcy's unkept bed. A sobbing Darcy leans on Karabi's shoulder. Karabi's leg bounces up and down.

DARCY

I mean, how could he just do that to me? Who does he think he is?

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

There, there.

Karabi pats Darcy's shoulder, maybe a little too sarcastically.

DARCY

What am I going to do? I'm over. My life is over.

Karabi rolls her eyes.

DARCY (cont'd)

You know he hasn't even texted me once since he broke up with me?

KARABI

Isn't that 'cause you're, like, no longer together?

Darcy moans, breaking down anew.

Karabi peeks at her phone.

KARABI (cont'd)

You know, I've really gotta get--

Darcy grabs ahold of Karabi's shoulders.

DARCY

No! You can't. Please. I need you right now. Please.

KARABI

But I'm gonna be late to--

DARCY

Who cares about the stupid sorority rush? Those girls won't be your friends. You already have friends. Come on, Karabi. I need you.

Karabi's shoulders slump. She won't meet Darcy's eyes.

DARCY

I'll make it up to you.

KARABI

(coldly)

How?



INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

It's another raging house party. A song with too much reverberating bass POUNDS.

Drunk students bounce up and down in unison to the music. Darcy is one of the jumpers, holding a drink in one hand.

Karabi watches from a wall, arms crossed.

A FRAT GUY dances a little too close to Karabi and bumps into her, spilling his drink on her.

Karabi sighs as if she's already accepted her fate.

KARABI

Of course.

Karabi tries signaling to Darcy, pointing to the exit. Darcy's too busy chugging a beer down.

KITCHEN

Karabi stands at a sink overflowing with dirty dishes. She attempts to wash out her stained shirt, rubbing a paper towel across her torso.

AUDRIANNA (O.S.)

Try ice.

KARABI

Huh?

Karabi looks up. AUDRIANNA WATERS (18), a tall and confident girl of mixed race leans against the kitchen counter. Her tight curls are falling out of a messy bun. She has a drink in hand.

AUDRIANNA

Ice. It's good for stains. I use it on paint all the time.

Karabi CRUMPLES her paper towel.

KARABI

Good to know. Art major?

AUDRIANNA

For now. We'll see how broke I get and then maybe I'll consider something more practical.

(CONTINUED)



KARABI

Hey, same.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Having migrated to the living room, Karabi and Audrianna stand in the corner. Karabi now sips on a beer along with Audrianna.

Darcy still jumps around with the crowd of students. She's hardly moved from her spot.

KARABI

Maybe I'm weird or something, but I just kinda feel like they all look dumb. I dunno.

AUDRIANNA

But that's kinda the point. Everyone should look weird to a sober person.

Karabi takes a good look at her beer before taking a big swig.

KARABI

You know, I missed my sorority rush for this. To be dragged here and then abandoned. It's stupid.

AUDRIANNA

That does sound kind of jerky. But at least you're being a good friend.

A bass DROPS in the music and Darcy roars.

KARABI

I don't think she'd really do the same for me. And I just don't get why we had to come here. Couldn't we have done the moping at the dorm? Where it's quiet?

AUDRIANNA

Everyone's got their ways of coping. I've got this one friend who totally just shuts down when he goes through something bad. He's been like that most of the semester.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Oh, yeah?

AUDRIANNA

I just wanna be like, Grayson what are you doing?

Karabi takes a more hesitant sip of drink now.

KARABI

Wait, Grayson? Grayson, who?

AUDRIANNA

Hyde.

KARABI

What's wrong with Grayson Hyde?

AUDRIANNA

You know him?

KARABI

Of course, we've been friends forever.

AUDRIANNA

You know what, I thought you looked familiar! He showed me a picture of you guys at your prom once.

KARABI

Uh...yeah.

AUDRIANNA

But you don't know?

KARABI

Know what?

AUDRIANNA

About his grandpa?

Karabi stares down Darcy. Darcy has made herself at home with the drunk crowd.

KARABI

I have to go.

INT. DORM - NIGHT

HALLWAY

Various motivational posters about STDs and other college related material are tacked on the walls. Karabi pounds at a door. The whiteboard reads: "Grayson and Leandre" in a stylized font.

KARABI

Grayson?

The door opens a crack.

KARABI (cont'd)

Grayson, what's--?

Leandre's head pokes out.

KARABI (cont'd)

Is Grayson here?

LEANDRE

That depends.

Karabi rolls her eyes and throws the door open the rest of the way.

GRAYSON AND LEANDRE'S DORM ROOM

Grayson's on his bunk, staring at the ceiling.

Karabi shoves herself past Leandre.

KARABI

What's the matter with you?

Grayson throws an arm over his head. Karabi comes closer to his bunk. Leandre idles on the wall.

KARABI (cont'd)

What happened with your grandpa?

Grayson throws his legs over the bed, sitting up.

GRAYSON

Who told you?

KARABI

It's not like I know anything. Some girl named Audrianna.

(CONTINUED)



GRAYSON

(mutters)

Dammit, Audri.

Grayson scratches his arm. Karabi looks a little taken aback.

KARABI

So that was the Audri?

GRAYSON

There is no "the Audri."5tttr

KARABI

I thought we were friends. Don't friends talk to each other? You know, you can talk to me. Why are you telling some random girl about your problems and not me?

GRAYSON

You don't need to know everything, okay? And Audri's not just some random girl.

Grayson's scratching is getting harder.

KARABI

But you told her, someone who you barely know, and you didn't tell me.

Karabi grabs Grayson's hand, trying to stop his itching. He yanks his hand back.

KARABI (cont'd)

You know, I've had a really bad day, too, so--

GRAYSON

Oh, yeah? Try me!

Karabi flinches as Leandre's hand comes down on her shoulder. He steers her back into the

HALLWAY

Karabi doesn't put up a fight. Leandre shuts the door behind the two of them. With an arm around her, Leandre walks her down the hallway.

Karabi looks up at Leandre, exasperated. But Leandre merely guides her forward.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

He--

LEANDRE

You ever think that maybe he  
doesn't want to talk about it?

KARABI

But...

They turn a corner. A couple of loitering STUDENTS stare at  
the two as they walk past.

LEANDRE

I know you guys have always been  
close. Which is great. But this is  
just something he wants to keep to  
himself.

KARABI

But...he told you. And he told that  
Audri girl and--

LEANDRE

He's allowed to tell whoever he  
wants.

Leandre and Karabi arrive at her door. Her and Darcy's name  
are sketched in an elegant, cursive font on the whiteboard.

KARABI

I know, but why didn't he tell me?

Leandre stuffs his hands into his pockets.

LEANDRE

Maybe you're not as close as you  
think. I don't tell you everything,  
either.

Karabi tugs at a strand of her hair.

KARABI

Why, what's going on with you?

Leandre shrugs, retreating.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Karabi stares at Darcy's empty bed, and then flops down on her own.

KARABI  
Everything's okay, Karabi.  
Everything will work out. Just wait  
and see.

INT. DINING HALL - MORNING

Karabi sits at the gang's usual table, alone. She stares into her cereal, lost in her own mind.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

Karabi absentmindedly answers her phone.

KARABI  
Hello?

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME TIME

Mala, in a hospital gown, lays in her white hospital bed.

MALA  
Bumble bee!

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

Karabi clamps a hand over her mouth.

MALA (cont'd)  
Bumble bee?

Karabi now covers her eyes and whimpers.

KARABI  
I was so worried.

She sobs into her cereal.

MALA  
No, no, baby! I'm okay! Everyone's  
okay!

KARABI  
I know.

Karabi wipes her tears and studies the faces of students around her, making sure no one is staring too hard.

(CONTINUED)



MALA

How you doing?

KARABI

How am I doing? How are you doing,  
you who scared me to death, who--

Karabi breathes deeply.

KARABI (cont'd)

It's been really hard.

MALA

Uh oh.

KARABI

My friends have all been dealing  
with stuff.

MALA

What kind of stuff?

KARABI

And then there's classes and  
homework, and I just miss you so  
freaking much, and I missed my  
sorority rush and...

Karabi assembles her trash together and gets up from her  
seat.

MALA

I'm so sorry, sweetie.

Karabi tosses her breakfast in a trash can.

KARABI

I just hate that I'm missing out on  
so much. I only missed the rush  
cause of Darcy, you know.

MALA

That's no reason to be as upset as  
you are, though. You're not usually  
like this.

KARABI

I know.

MALA

Are you sure that's the only stuff  
troubling you?

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

It's a lot of stuff...I don't know.

MALA

You're worrying me.

KARABI

Well, blame the spaghetti crew.

MALA

It does sounds like your friends  
are holding you back.

KARABI

That's impossible, they wouldn't do  
that, we've known each other for--

Karabi spots Grayson across the cafeteria. His face is  
sullen, his posture slumped, his hair messy.

Karabi lowers her cellphone.

KARABI (cont'd)

(shouts)

Gray--

(whispers)

--son.

Next to Grayson, Leandre throws a supportive arm around him.  
Karabi turns around on the spot.

MALA

Aren't you forgetting something?

Karabi stumbles getting her phone back up to her ear.

KARABI

What?

MALA

Don't you want to know how your  
niece is doing?

KARABI

What? Yeah, of course.

MALA

You do know that I just went  
through something crazy, right?

KARABI

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)



MALA

A little more important than your  
problems with your high school  
friends?

Karabi jerks her phone back and stares at the screen like  
she's been hurt.

She puts her ear to the phone again.

KARABI

Sorry...go on.

Across the room, Grayson gazes at Karabi solemnly.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - AFTERNOON

Karabi sits at her desk, her knees pulled up to her chest.  
She wiggles her phone in her hand.

Darcy sleeps on her bed, fully clothed and face painted with  
makeup from the night before.

KARABI

I'm gonna text Grayson.

Darcy lays silently in sleep.

KARABI (cont'd)

(whispers)

If you love me, you'll stop me.

Unsurprisingly, Darcy doesn't respond. Karabi shakes her  
head.

She texts: "Whatcha doin tonight?"

Karabi nods at her phone and glances at the clock on her  
nightstand. It's 4:13.

CUT TO:

The clock reads 7:15. Karabi lounges on her bed, holding her  
phone out at arms-width in front of her face.

No response from Grayson.

Karabi observes Darcy. The slumbering hipster has not roused  
from her hibernation.

BUZZ.

Karabi starts.

(CONTINUED)



A response from Grayson: "I think I'm gonna go party."

KARABI (cont'd)

What?

She texts back: "But you hate partying."

Karabi clutches her phone to her chest, sinking into her pillow, and closing her eyes.

CUT TO:

KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

The clock reads 11:45.

While Darcy clearly still hasn't moved, Karabi sleeps with her hair tied up.

An ambulance HOWLS in the distance. Karabi stirs from her sleep.

The ambulance passes the window, the red lights sweeping the room.

Darcy turns over.

DARCY

(mutters)

Everything is too loud.

Karabi blindly searches for her phone on her nightstand. She flinches as the screen's light comes on.

No response from Grayson.

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Karabi and Darcy eat dinner at a booth, each woman lost inside the depths of her cafeteria food.

Darcy skims through her phone.

KARABI

I was thinking maybe tonight we could--

DARCY

Yo!

Karabi jumps.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Yes, dear. I'm right here.

DARCY

I just got a text from Marcus.  
Another party tonight.

KARABI

It's Tuesday.

DARCY

Wanna come?

KARABI

Also who's Marcus?

DARCY

It'll be fun!

KARABI

Are you listening to me?

Darcy cocks her head, holding a hand out across the table.  
Karabi grabs it, hesitantly.

DARCY

Course I am, babe.

KARABI

Tonight, I was actually thinking we  
could just--

DARCY

Except I really gotta make this  
party.

Karabi SLIDES her hand back.

KARABI

Do you like this Marcus guy?

Darcy shrugs.

Karabi doesn't believe her.

DARCY

Okay then...I'm gonna go.

Darcy collects her belongings and scampers off.

Karabi is officially defeated. She scans the room, her eyes  
laying on Grayson across the way, eating by himself.

Karabi grabs her things and rushes over to his table.

(CONTINUED)

As she sits, Grayson covers up his arms with his sweater.

KARABI

Why are you eating by yourself? You should have joined us.

Grayson folds his arms across his stomach. He's barely touched the food on his tray.

KARABI (cont'd)

Are we still cool?

Grayson gives the smallest nod of his head.

Karabi sits back in her seat, fractionally relieved.

KARABI (cont'd)

How was the party on Saturday?

GRAYSON

Party?

KARABI

Yeah, the one you...told me about?

Grayson stares down the table space between them.

GRAYSON

I didn't party.

KARABI

Oh. Then what'd you do?

GRAYSON

I was in the hospital.

Karabi leans forward, alert.

KARABI

What?

GRAYSON

I tried to kill myself.

Karabi's on the edge of her seat.

KARABI

(whispers)

What?

GRAYSON

Don't tell Darcy.

(CONTINUED)



KARABI

Why?

GRAYSON

Just don't tell her, okay?

KARABI

I mean why, why did you do that?

GRAYSON

My family's...been nuts lately. My grandpa is sick. He's really close to--

Grayson pauses to compose himself.

GRAYSON

To dying. And everyone's fighting about who should get his money and...it really sucks.

KARABI

I'm so sorry. I had no idea.

Karabi sinks into her seat. They look down at the table in unison.

KARABI (cont'd)

I've been having a really tough time, too. Sometimes I think that--

GRAYSON

Are you trying to empathize with me right now?

KARABI

Yeah?

GRAYSON

Don't.

Karabi's hurt.

KARABI

But--

GRAYSON

Don't.

They stare each other down. Silent.

INT. DORM LOUNGE - NIGHT

Karabi rests her head on her desk, her arms blocking her face, her hair mishappened and wild.

With a BURST, Darcy stumbles through the doorway, chuckling. She holds one of her platform boots in hand, barefoot on one foot.

ZANE (20), lingers behind her. He's a heavy set guy with a bald spot and struggling beard plastered across his face.

Karabi turns her head and cracks open an eye.

DARCY  
(slurring)  
Sorry. Did we wake you?

KARABI  
No.

Darcy holds onto Zane's shoulder and laughs for a minute.

DARCY  
Okay. My shoe broke. Isn't that  
funny?

She waves the broken boot side to side, the heel flapping mercilessly in the wind.

Karabi turns her head back into her arms.

KARABI  
Hilarious.

Darcy pauses.

DARCY  
Give us a minute, Zane?

Zane shrugs and takes a step back into the hallway. Darcy closes the door.

DARCY  
You okay?

The clock on Karabi's nightstand reveals it to be just past one in the morning.

DARCY  
It's late for you.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

You're one to talk.

Darcy gets down on her knees and crawls to Karabi's side. Darcy leans her body on Karabi's desk and reaches an arm up to Karabi's shoulder.

DARCY

What's wrong, love?

KARABI

Everything.

Darcy snickers.

DARCY

Maybe you need counseling.

KARABI

It's not funny.

Darcy slumps to the ground and stretches out her entire body on the floor.

KARABI (cont'd)

Something's wrong with, Grayson.

Darcy snorts and rolls over onto her back. She inches over to her desk, pulling herself up, and fishing inside the drawer.

DARCY

That's nothing new.

Darcy extracts a super glue bottle from the drawer.

KARABI

There's something actually wrong, though.

Darcy proceeds to spread the glue across the bottom of her broken shoe's heel.

KARABI (cont'd)

He told me not to tell you, though.

DARCY

Good.

KARABI

I think you should ask him.

(CONTINUED)



DARCY

I don't want to know.

Darcy slams her shoe down.

Karabi's shoulders slump.

KARABI

What's happening?

DARCY

Nothing.

KARABI

No, I mean what's happening to us?  
The Spaghetti Club?

DARCY

We're in college now, babe. Things  
are different.

KARABI

I thought that nothing had to  
change?

DARCY

Did you know that the human brain  
isn't fully developed until age  
twenty-five?

KARABI

No...

Darcy struggles to put her shoe back on.

KARABI (cont'd)

So you won't talk to Grayson?

DARCY

I care not.

Darcy hoists herself up, clinging onto her desk.

KARABI

Where are you going?

Darcy looks into the mirror on her desk, touching up her  
makeup.

DARCY

Back to the party.

Darcy stumbles over to the door, pausing with one hand on  
the knob.

(CONTINUED)

DARCY (cont'd)  
I don't know when I'll be back.  
Don't wait up for me.

SLAM. Darcy's gone.

Karabi breaths come rapidly. She throws open her laptop and quickly Googles: "Michigan counseling."

INT. COUNSELING OFFICE - AFTERNOON

WAITING ROOM

The room is drab and bare. The only source of color are some dilapidated children's toys sitting untouched in the corner.

Karabi sits cross-legged on one of the chairs lining the wall. Her foot bounces.

Across from her, a SAD WOMAN sniffles into a tissue. Karabi watches her curiously.

LISA (O.S.)  
Kara-bee...Anand?

Karabi sighs.

INT. COUNSELOR'S ROOM - LATER

In the similarly boring room, LISA and Karabi face each other. Lisa, on an office chair, is a middle-aged blonde woman. Ageing is hitting her hard.

Karabi sits on the plaid couch opposite of her. Cross-legged, again.

A clock TICKS in the background.

Karabi's eyes dart everywhere in the room except Lisa.

Lisa TAPS her pen on her clipboard. She's has only a few notes scribbled down.

Karabi CHIPS at her thumbnail.

Lisa sighs.

LISA  
Well, I think you've done the right thing by coming here today, Ms. Karabi.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

You do?

LISA

Absolutely. After hearing your story, I think you definitely need our help.

KARABI

So what's my diagnosis?

LISA

I'm sorry?

KARABI

You know, like...what do I need to do to get better? And how can I help my friends?

Lisa writes a quick note on her clipboard.

LISA

I think our best course of action would be to stick to yourself, rather than your friends right now.

KARABI

Right, but--

LISA

Karabi, if you want a diagnosis, I'd say you're rather depressed.

Karabi uncrosses her legs.

KARABI

(skeptical)

Depressed.

LISA

Yes, very.

KARABI

I don't really think I--

LISA

Maybe even suicidal.

Karabi slumps deep into the couch's cushions.

KARABI

Okay? So what can I--

BEEP BEEP. Lisa hits a knob on her wristwatch.

(CONTINUED)



LISA

I'm afraid that's all the time we have today, Ms. Karabi.

KARABI

So you're just gonna tell me I'm suicidal and then send me on my merry way?

LISA

Make sure to present your co-pay at checkout.

Lisa closes the legal pad on her clipboard with a SNAP.

INT. GRAYSON AND LEANDRE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

The door CREAKS as Karabi rushes into the room. Grayson and Leandre lounge on their respective beds.

Karabi swings her bookbag over her shoulder and lets it fall to the ground.

Grayson and Leandre both regard her lazily.

She gives a defeated look to each boy.

CUT TO:

Karabi sits on the floor, leaning against the bedpost. A spread of books and papers is out in front of her.

Grayson and Leandre study on their beds.

Karabi looks up from her material.

KARABI

I saw a counselor yesterday.

Leandre glances at Grayson, but Grayson's eyes stay glued to his textbook.

KARABI (cont'd)

She told me some unsettling news.

LEANDRE

Like what?

KARABI

That--

(CONTINUED)

GRAYSON

That your feelings got hurt and  
you're totally justified and  
absolutely nothing is wrong with  
you?

Karabi throws her book closed and gets to her knees to face  
Grayson.

KARABI

The exact opposite, actually.  
You're not the only one suffering,  
man.

GRAYSON

Wanna bet?

Grayson springs up from his bed and exits the room, SLAMMING  
the door behind him. Karabi grunts at his leave.

Leandre rubs his temples.

Karabi settles back to the floor and crosses her arms over  
her stomach.

KARABI

She said I'm suicidal, for the  
record.

LEANDRE

(sarcastic)

I'm so sorry to hear that.

Karabi rolls her eyes.

KARABI

What? What is up with everyone? Is  
it that ridiculous that I might  
actually have problems? I'm not  
little miss sunshine all the time,  
you know.

Leandre shushes her.

KARABI (cont'd)

(desperate)

What?

Another shush.

KARABI (cont'd)

Headache?

(CONTINUED)

LEANDRE

I need to get out of here.

KARABI

Where?

LEANDRE

This college, this state, this country, whatever. I'm sick of all the drama.

Karabi gets to her feet.

KARABI

You...wanna leave?

LEANDRE

I want to travel to a faraway place where there's no problems and everyone likes each other.

KARABI

There's gonna be drama wherever you go, though.

LEANDRE

But wherever I go, you guys won't be there.

Karabi's eyebrows knit together.

LEANDRE

It's not like that. It's that...It would be nice to meet some new people.

KARABI

I agree! That's why I wanted to sorority rush in the first place, but you guys wouldn't let me!

LEANDRE

It's not like we tied you up and wouldn't let you go. You decided not to do that on your own, for Darcy.

Karabi grunts. She knows he's right.

KARABI

Leandre...you can't leave. We love you. You're not serious, are you?

Beat. Leandre glances at his trumpet in the corner.

(CONTINUED)



LEANDRE  
Probably not.

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Alone at her table, Karabi furrows her brow, watching something in the distance. She cocks her head.

Grayson and Audrianna are eating at a table together across the way. Grayson is smiling.

KARABI  
What the heck?

Audrianna says something and Grayson laughs out loud.

KARABI (cont'd)  
What in the...?

Grayson and Audrianna stand up from their table, gathering their belongings. Grayson takes Audrianna's hand.

Karabi gapes.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Don't go over there.

Grayson and Audrianna start to walk away.

Karabi grabs her bag.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Don't go over there.

Karabi dashes over, abandoning her food. She bumps into a chubby FRESHMAN who's carrying a tray.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Sorry, sorry, sorry.

She runs past him.

KARABI (cont'd)  
(shouting)  
Are you guys dating?

Grayson looks over his shoulder. His smile falters a little. Audrianna is unphased, stubbornly chipper.

GRAYSON  
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Since when?

GRAYSON

Recently.

AUDRIANNA

It just kinda happened.

KARABI

Oh...um...congrats.

An awkward moment of silence. Karabi notes their bookbags in hand.

KARABI (cont'd)

So you guys taking off?

GRAYSON

Yep.

KARABI

Okay. Have fun.

Grayson tips his head to Karabi and trots off with Audrianna, the couple still hand in hand.

Karabi watches them go, breathing heavily.

KARABI (V.O.)

It came out of nowhere. I didn't even know he liked her.

INT. COUNSELOR'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Lisa TAPS her pen against her clipboard. TAP. TAP. TAP.

Karabi sits up straight and attentive on the couch. She's trying hard to cooperate today.

LISA

And you like this Grayson boy, too?

KARABI

I mean...I thought I did. I at least thought that we were close enough that he would tell me when he had a crush on someone.

LISA

Well, there are other fish in the sea, I'm sure you know.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Obviously, but this is a person I care about, who I have cared about for a long time.

LISA

See, to me, your reaction still feels very high school.

KARABI

(skeptical)

How so?

LISA

You've got to put all this drama behind you.

KARABI

I can't just let my friends go.

LISA

It seems like they've let you go. Who likes who, who's doing what. It's all past you now. Enjoy college.

Karabi runs a hand across her forehead.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Karabi swivels on her chair at her desk. Darcy's body hangs halfway off her bed, probably sleeping.

KARABI

Grayson started dating Audrianna.

DARCY

(muffled)

Great.

INT. ART CLASS - DAY

Karabi and Darcy paint at their separate easels. Darcy looks like she's about to fall asleep standing up.

KARABI

Did you know that he liked her?

DARCY

Who?

(CONTINUED)



KARABI

Grayson.

DARCY

No.

Karabi paints a few too many harsh strokes on her painting.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Karabi and Darcy stroll on the crowded sidewalk.

KARABI

I thought he liked you, though.

DARCY

Grayson?

KARABI

Yeah.

DARCY

Oh my God, we're still talking  
about this.

INT. HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Karabi sits attentively at her desk before class starts.  
Leandre meanders into the room, plopping down next to her.

KARABI

Why didn't you tell me Grayson and  
Audrianna started dating?

Leandre shrugs, sitting deeper into his chair.

KARABI (cont'd)

Why am I being kept out of the  
loop?

LEANDRE

There is no loop. It's not that big  
of a deal.

Karabi runs her fingers through her hair and lets her head  
fall to her desk.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Karabi stares at the ceiling, her hair a mess from a rough night's sleep. She turns over on her side and looks at her clock.

She gasps.

KARABI

It's Thanksgiving break.

She sits up.

KARABI (cont'd)

It's Thanksgiving break! Finally!  
Darcy, it's--

Darcy's bed is empty.

KARABI (cont'd)

Of course.

She throws the blankets off of her.

EXT. DORM - MORNING

Arms open, Karabi runs up to her parents car. Priya, awaiting her daughter, hugs her.

PRIYA

I missed you so much, my college girl!

KARABI

I missed you, too, I missed you, too. Oh my gosh, it's been so stressful.

Sam climbs out of the driver seat of the car and hugs the two ladies.

SAM

Is this all the stuff you have?

Sam tugs on the duffel bag hanging from Karabi's shoulders.

KARABI

No.

She looks to a pile of bags sitting at the dorm's front door.

Sam clamps his hands together.

(CONTINUED)



SAM

That makes more sense.

INT. CAR - DAY

Karabi is happily sandwiched between her personal belongings, smiling to herself in the backseat.

Priya drives. Sam holds his wife's hand on the gearshift.

PRIYA

Almost there, bachcha.

Karabi beams.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Karabi tiptoes into the clean and composed modern kitchen. She hugs herself and takes a deep breath, dropping her duffle bag.

Sam bursts in with the rest of the bags, panting.

Karabi giggles and skips to his side to help him.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

A gorgeous Thanksgiving spread is artfully set on a long dining table. The meal is a mixture of traditional American and Indian food.

Sam and Priya share the head of the table. Mala's caucasian husband, JOHN (30), sits next to Sam. John's got a lumber jack's beard, paired with a kind smile and face.

PRIYA

We can start eating whenever you  
two are ready!

Karabi sits on the floor, next to Mala. Together, they coo over LEENA, Mala's newborn daughter. The smallest wisp of hair rests on top of her round head.

MALA

We're on our way.

KARABI

One sec.

Karabi offers a finger to the baby. Leena wraps a fist around it.

(CONTINUED)



Karabi squeals.

KARABI (cont'd)  
I can't believe this is your  
offspring.

MALA  
I know.

KARABI  
You created this human being.

MALA  
I know.

KARABI  
So young...so pure.

Mala pats Karabi's head and stands up, scooping up baby  
Leena in the process.

DINING ROOM - LATER

The famiy sits around the table, eating. Leena squirms in  
John's lap.

MALA  
I would say I'm thankful for being  
able to bring Leena home in time  
for Thanksgiving.

PRIYA  
I agree.

Mala wipes some drool from the baby's mouth.

PRIYA (cont'd)  
Okay, Karabi's turn.

KARABI  
I'm thankful for being alive...and  
here.

PRIYA  
So vague.

KARABI  
No, really. I'm just glad I'm alive  
at this point.

Sam and Priya exchange a worried look. Mala chews on her  
cheek.

Sam leans across the table, grabbing Karabi's hand.

(CONTINUED)

SAM  
Everything okay?

Karabi pushes a few peas around her plate.

INT. DARCY'S DINING ROOM - SAME TIME

Darcy pushes a few peas around her plate.

DARCY'S MOM, middle-aged and tired, eats hungrily at a lopsided table. Darcy's little sister, Rachel, can't seem to sit still in her seat.

The family eats in a cluttered, shag-carpeted room in dire need of a good cleaning.

Darcy rests her cheek on her chin and sighs.

DARCY'S MOM  
You're upset.

DARCY  
What gave you that idea?

Darcy sculpts shapes into her mashed potatoes.

RACHEL  
She's still upset about Brandon.

Darcy's Mom puts down her utensils and reaches under the table.

RACHEL (cont'd)  
I miss him, too, sister. Does this mean I can date him now?

DARCY  
If you like STDs, go for it.

Rachel shivers. Darcy's mom lays a large manila envelope onto the table, clearing some plates out of the way for space.

DARCY'S MOM  
This came for you. From school.

DARCY  
Cool.

RACHEL  
(accusatory)  
Ooooh.

Darcy remains calm, but you can see the worry behind her facade.

(CONTINUED)

DARCY'S MOM

Do you wanna give me a guess as to  
what this is about before I tell  
you?

Darcy shakes her head and sinks into more mashed potatoes.

DARCY'S MOM (cont'd)

You're on academic probation, hon.

Rachel stands up from her chair.

RACHEL

What?!

Darcy stares daggers at Rachel. Her little sister is having  
way too much fun with this.

INT. GRAYSON'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Curled up in the fetal position on his made bed, Grayson  
covers his ears with his pillow, shutting his eyes tight.

There's muffled sounds of fighting in the distance.

GRAYSON'S MOM (O.S.)

We're doing this for the family,  
got it?

GRAYSON'S DAD (O.S.)

Don't give me that excuse, it  
hasn't been about the family since  
your dad got sick.

A couple of tears spill from his eyes and roll down his  
nose.

GRAYSON'S MOM (O.S.)

Do not bring my father into this  
right now!

GRAYSON'S DAD (O.S.)

Just because he's sick doesn't mean  
he doesn't count as part of the  
family now. Or is the money really  
the only thing you care about?



INT. GRAYSON'S DINING ROOM - LATER

Grayson's family eats quietly around a lavish Thanksgiving table. Grayson's Mom, a plump African American woman who's too busy to be here avoids eye contact with her husband.

Grayson's Dad, Caucasian with dark rings around his eyes, is a lion sitting at the head of the table.

GRAYSON'S SISTER and GIRLFRIEND, in their late twenties, sit side-by-side, holding hands under the table together. They exchange worried looks with each other every now and again.

A puffy-eyed Grayson texts on his phone under the table.

He gets an incoming text from Audrianna: "I'm here for you."

Girlfriend struggles cutting into her turkey with her fork.

Grayson reveals the slightest of smiles and starts to text back a response.

GRAYSON'S DAD

No texting. It's Thanksgiving.

Grayson's smile is replaced with an even bigger frown than before. He puts his phone on top of the table, upside-down.

Girlfriend still struggles with her turkey.

GRAYSON

I wish we coulda had Thanksgiving at the nursing home this year.

GRAYSON'S SISTER

Me too.

MOM

That place is so depressing. It's so much nicer here.

GRAYSON

But grandpa's not gonna get another Thanksgiving.

Mom pats his shoulder.

MOM

We'll go visit him later today.

Girlfriend throws her fork down.

(CONTINUED)

GIRLFRIEND

Ya'll got a knife? 'Cause I really need a knife to eat this thing.

Silence. Grayson folds his hands in his lap. All heads except Girlfriend's seem to turn down.

GIRLFRIEND

I'm more of a fork and knife kinda gal is the thing.

Grayson's sister kicks her under the table.

MOM

There are no knives in my household right now.

DAD

Our's.

GIRLFRIEND

What? Why?

Grayson's sister stomps on Girlfriend's foot.

GIRLFRIEND

Ow!

DAD

You can thank Grayson for that.

Grayson is mortified.

GRAYSON

Can I be excused?

DAD

Absolutely not. It's Thanksgiving and we're doing this together like we always have.

SISTER

You okay, little bro?

MOM

Look what you did. You made him upset.

Grayson stands up, his chair SCREECHING everyone to a silence.



## INT. GRAYSON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grayson rushes into his room, out of breath. He SLAMS the door.

He topples to his bed, shaking. He punches something into his phone and brings it to his ear.

GRAYSON

I just needed to hear your voice.

While listening to the other line, he slowly rights himself up.

GRAYSON (cont'd)

Thanks, Audri.

## INT. LEANDRE'S DINING ROOM - SAME TIME

Leandre eats with his parents on either side of him at a circular table stuffed into the corner of the room.

A train in the distance ROLLS by and briefly shakes the room.

LEANDRE'S DAD

So school's been good?

Leandre shrugs, mouth full.

LEANDRE

More or less.

Leandre's Dad drops his napkin.

LEANDRE'S MOM

Good grades, I hope?

Leandre's Mom picks up the napkin and plops it on her husband's lap.

LEANDRE

More or less.

DAD

Excellent.

MOM

Minstrel! An extra serving of pumpkin pie for the gratuitous King!

(CONTINUED)



DAD

Ah, yes, but of course.

Dad cuts into the half-eaten pie.

LEANDRE

There is one thing, though.

Dad serves his son the pie.

DAD

Dean's List, perhaps?

LEANDRE

I don't think so...

MOM

Girlfriend?

LEANDRE

Definitely not.

DAD

Illegitimate child, then?

The parents giggle together.

LEANDRE

I wanna transfer.

The parents quiet down simultaneously.

MOM

Why's that?

DAD

I thought you were having fun.

LEANDRE

I was...but then the drama started happening. I just feel like I need to get away from it.

MOM

Aren't you away from it right now?

LEANDRE

Get away in general. Be on my own for a little while.

Mom slowly lets her cutlery fall to her plate with a CLANK.

Dad wipes his mouth with his napkin.

(CONTINUED)

DAD  
If that's what you want.

LEANDRE  
I'm highly considering it.

MOM  
Where were you thinking of going,  
exactly?

LEANDRE  
USC?

Mom fans herself with her napkin.

Dad scoops up some dirty plates and leaves the table.

INT. KARABI'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Karabi drops a load of dirty dishes into the sink with a CLANK. Mala comes up beside her with another stack of plates, this time setting them on the counter gently.

Karabi turns the faucet on and squirts too much dishwashing soap into the sink.

Mala puts an arm around her sister. Karabi jumps at the gesture.

Mala turns the sink off and puts the other arm around Karabi. Karabi settles into her sister's hug and sighs.

INT. KARABI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Karabi is snuggled up on her childhood bed, weeping. It seems she hasn't changed much since fall break ended.

A soft KNOCK at her door. Her parents approach inside with caution.

Karabi shields her face.

SAM  
Sweetheart--

Karabi snaps up, her hair flying every which way.

KARABI  
Time to go back.

She wipes the tears away and forces a smile.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI (cont'd)  
Yep. I can do this.

INT. CAR - DAY

In the backseat, Karabi rests her head on the window, her face a blank slate.

She checks the Spaghetti Club group chat on her phone. There's no new messages.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Amidst her sea of belongings, Karabi gives her parents a hug goodbye.

As soon as they shut the door behind them, Karabi sinks onto her bed, the tears starting anew.

HALLWAY

As Karabi's parents leave, Darcy turns the corner and runs straight into them. A tattered overnight bag is in her hand.

PRIYA  
Well if it isn't Darcy!

DARCY  
Hi.

Darcy tries to shove past them.

SAM  
It's been forever since we've seen you last.

DARCY  
Happens.

Darcy's hand goes for the doorknob.

KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM

Karabi sits attentively, listening to the conversation happening outside.

HALLWAY

PRIYA  
It's too bad you girls weren't able to get together over any of the breaks. We always love seeing you.

(CONTINUED)



Darcy's hand hesitates on the doorknob. She turns around, faking the most convincing smile.

DARCY

Next break for sure.

Sam and Priya nod goodbye and head out.

KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM

Darcy BURSTS through the door. She nearly trips over Karabi's pile of stuff.

DARCY (cont'd)

Jesus, messy much?

She tosses her bag onto the bed and immediately throws her shoes off.

Karabi wipes her nose and sniffles.

KARABI

I just got here.

DARCY

'Sup.

KARABI

Hi?

Darcy UPZIPS her bag and starts to extract her clothes.

DARCY

What's wrong with you?

KARABI

Well--

DARCY

Just kidding, I don't care.

Karabi is baffled.

DARCY (cont'd)

So I'm on academic probation.

KARABI

Huh?

DARCY

Yeah, if I don't get my grades up soon I'm gonna be kicked out.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

Little miss high school Dean's List  
achiever?

Darcy slows her unpacking, staring at the shirt in hand.

DARCY

Guess I'm not little miss Dean's  
List achiever no more, huh?

She whips around to Karabi, beaming.

DARCY (cont'd)

That's okay. I'm cool with it.

KARABI

No, you're not.

DARCY

I am.

KARABI

No. You're not. I know you. You  
can't possibly be okay with this,  
you--

DARCY

Ever think that maybe you don't  
know me anymore?

Karabi has no words.

Darcy shrugs as if she knew this was coming.

DARCY (cont'd)

Sorry I changed. You should try it  
sometime. It's good for you.

Karabi exits for the

HALLWAY

SLAMMING the door behind her. She leans on it, trying to  
calm her breathing.

KARABI

Why me?

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Karabi sits at her desk in her PJs, checking her e-mail.  
Darcy's texting on her phone, snuggled up in her bed.

Karabi CLICKS on her laptop, opening up an e-mail.

It's a coupon for a free birthday meal at a fast food chain,  
asking for Karabi to come in for a free meal on her "special  
day."

KARABI  
Shit. I forgot.

DARCY  
Hm?

KARABI  
I turn nineteen today.

Darcy's phone slips and it falls on her face. She winces.

DARCY  
Happy birthday.

KARABI  
(coldly)  
Thanks.

Karabi drums her fingers on her laptop.

KARABI (cont'd)  
Are you guys still gonna have that  
party for me?

Darcy rolls over in bed, turning her back to Karabi.

DARCY  
Sure.

INT. ART CLASS - DAY

Karabi smiles to herself as she paints a small, red heart  
onto her flowery easel. She spares a glance at Darcy.  
Darcy's submerged in her own work, painting a portrait of  
someone who resembles Brandon a little too much.

Karabi colors in the heart.



INT. DORM LOUNGE - EVENING

Karabi ROLLS a party horn blower in between her hands. Back and forth. Back and forth.

She sits alone on the couch. A couple of colorful balloons sit sadly in the corners.

Karabi checks the time on her phone. It's about 9:30. Her friends probably aren't coming.

The door opens. Karabi perks up.

Audrianna skips in. Karabi deflates.

AUDRIANNA

Hey!

Karabi nods.

AUDRIANNA (cont'd)

Happy birthday.

KARABI

Thanks.

AUDRIANNA

Where's Grayson?

Karabi shrugs.

AUDRIANNA (cont'd)

That's weird. He told me that he'd be here.

KARABI

Me, too.

Audrianna regards Karabi awkwardly for a moment. Audrianna brushes her hands against her pants and sits down on an adjacent chair next to the couch.

Karabi nods to herself.

AUDRIANNA

What?

KARABI

Nothing.

The awkward silence is painful. Audrianna rubs her hands together.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI (cont'd)

It's just that...

Karabi chuckles.

Audrianna smiles, hopeful that maybe they've found something to talk about.

AUDRIANNA

What?

KARABI

It's just funny to me that you're the only one who showed up.

AUDRIANNA

(hope fading)

Huh?

KARABI

I mean, you're the one that kinda broke up our crew.

Audrianna shrinks in her seat.

AUDRIANNA

Excuse me?

KARABI

I mean, we were fine before you showed up. But then you had to go and drive a wedge between me and Grayson and now Leandre wants to leave. And Darcy's gone crazy.

AUDRIANNA

I don't even know who Darcy is, I've never even met her.

Karabi stands up.

KARABI

Exactly. Exactly my point!

AUDRIANNA

I'm really sorry if I hurt you, but--

KARABI

You don't know us. You're an outsider. We've all been friends since freshmen year of high school. Did you know that we started our school's--

(CONTINUED)

AUDRIANNA  
First official club dedicated to  
only eating pasta?

Karabi stills. Audrianna stands up to face her.

AUDRIANNA (cont'd)  
And how you all used to stay up all  
night binge watching your favorite  
TV shows? And how you all went to  
prom together as a group?

Karabi blanches. Audrianna takes a step forward.

AUDRIANNA  
What do you have against me? Why am  
I an outsider to you?

Karabi searches for the right words.

KARABI  
(stuttering)  
It's that you barged your way in,  
you just started dating Grayson out  
of nowhere.

AUDRIANNA  
Did I need to fill out an  
application?

KARABI  
No, but--

AUDRIANNA  
And while I'm at it, why are there  
outsiders and insiders? You're a  
group of individual people who  
happen to be close.

Audrianna gives Karabi a look, up and down.

AUDRIANNA  
Or used to be.

Karabi's getting a little more frantic.

KARABI  
Why did you come here? Why are you  
here? Why do you keep messing  
everything up?

(CONTINUED)



AUDRIANNA

I told you. I thought Grayson was coming.

Karabi's mood seems to keep plummeting.

AUDRIANNA (cont'd)

And...I thought it would give me a good chance to get to know you a little better. But I don't think you're gonna let me do that.

Karabi huffs, pushing past Audrianna and out the door.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Karabi sits at her desk, her leg bouncing up and down in aggravation.

The clock on her nightstand reads 10:45 p.m.

Phone in hand, she's staring at a text from Darcy: "Sorry for missing your birthday party. I had a different one to attend. Sorry!"

Karabi grunts.

KARABI

It's okay.

She's typed in "It's okay," but she quickly erases it and hits the call button. She breathes heavily through her nose as the phone RINGS.

LOUD MUSIC blasts through on the other line.

DARCY (V.O.)

Hello?

KARABI

It's not okay!

INT. HOUSE - SAME TIME

Darcy stands still in a sea of thrashing STUDENTS. She plugs one ear with her finger.

DARCY

What?

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

You don't get to say sorry! This is not okay!

DARCY

Darling--

Karabi paces around her room.

KARABI

No darling! No sweetie! Quit talking down to me!

DARCY

I don't--

KARABI

Get back over here so I can yell at you!

Darcy walks to a quieter corner of the house.

DARCY

I can't just leave so easily, I gotta find a ride.

KARABI

Leave your stupid-ass party and come talk to me face to face!

DARCY

So you think I'm just gonna drop everything I'm doing so you can be mad at me?

KARABI

Oh, I'm gonna be mad at you no matter what you're doing. Darling.

DARCY

I'll get there as fast as I can.

Karabi groans.

KARABI

So one in the morning. Got it. I'll be waiting.

Karabi hangs up.

Darcy drops her phone limply to her side.

INT. KARABI AND DARCY'S DORM ROOM - LATER

Karabi hasn't budged from her desk. She stares at her clock, arms crossed.

The time has just changed to 1 a.m.

Darcy walks in on cue.

Karabi switches her killer stare to Darcy.

DARCY

Hi?

Karabi leaps up from her seat, grabs Darcy's arm, and drags her out the door.

DARCY (cont'd)

Hey!

HALLWAY

DARCY (cont'd)

(whispering)

What are you doing?

Karabi's expression is dead set and determined as she drags Darcy along.

The two arrive outside of Grayson and Leandre's door. Karabi knocks frantically.

The door CREAKS open, a tired Leandre beyond it.

LEANDRE

What?

Karabi shoves past him into

GRAYSON AND LEANDRE'S DORM ROOM

She feels for the lightswitch on the wall and illuminates the room. A sleeping Grayson scrambles in his bed.

GRAYSON

What's happening?

KARABI

I'd like to know the same thing!

Darcy shuffles her way inside. Leandre shuts the door.

(CONTINUED)



LEANDRE

It's one a.m, Karabi. Not cool.

KARABI

Oh, I will tell you what's not cool!

Karabi points to Darcy.

KARABI (cont'd)

Ditching my birthday party to hang out with more strangers.

Karabi points to Leandre.

KARABI (cont'd)

Not showing up entirely without an excuse.

Karabi points to Grayson.

KARABI (cont'd)

Sending your stupid girlfriend in your place.

The room is unsettlingly quiet. Grayson sits up in his bed.

DARCY

(sarcastic)

Well, what do you want us to say?  
We're sorry? We're sorry, Karabi.  
We've been terrible friends.

KARABI

I have been trying so hard! So hard to keep us all together, but you guys are just giving up!

GRAYSON

We aren't giving up.

LEANDRE

We're just moving on.

KARABI

But I don't understand. Why do we have to? Why aren't we talking to each other anymore? I thought we're Spaghetti Club friends forever.

DARCY

You sound like you're ten.

(CONTINUED)

LEANDRE  
Yeah.

GRAYSON  
I agree. You're being  
ridiculous, coming in here  
at one in the morning,  
waking us up for--

KARABI  
I wouldn't have come in so late if  
Darcy hadn't taken so long to get  
back.

DARCY  
I wouldn't have taken so long to  
get back if Brandon never broke up  
with me in the first place. Okay?

KARABI  
That's bull and you know it.  
Brandon doesn't make you stay out  
all night and skip class. You do.

DARCY  
You have no idea what's it's been  
like. Partying is the only thing  
that makes me feel better.

KARABI  
Oh, yeah. I'm sure your liver feels  
great.

Karabi's hit a nerve.

DARCY  
Okay, what makes you think that--

LEANDRE  
You know why I couldn't make it  
tonight?

Why?  
KARABI

DARCY  
Sure. Interrupt me.

LEANDRE (cont'd)  
I was filling out my application  
for USC and looking for apartments  
out there.

Karabi's hand goes to her chest.

(CONTINUED)

KARABI

What?

LEANDRE

That's right. I'm outta here at the end of the semester.

Grayson shakes his head.

KARABI

You haven't even been accepted yet and you're already moving?

LEANDRE

Even if I don't get in, that's where I want to live. There's more for me there.

Leandre affectionately eyes his trumpet, gleaming in the corner of the room.

Karabi's eyes look everywhere except at her friends.

GRAYSON

I sent Audri over because I wanted you to try and become friends.

Karabi rolls her eyes.

KARABI

Clever. That's what she said, too.

Grayson stands up and walks closer to her.

GRAYSON

I'm serious. I am trying. With everything going on with my family and my mental health, I am trying, Karabi. It's not like I want to lose you as a friend.

Grayson gestures around the room.

GRAYSON (cont'd)

It's not like any of us want to.

Karabi looks down, tears flooding her eyes.

KARABI

I hate it when things change.

(CONTINUED)



DARCY

Oh my God.

KARABI

What?

DARCY

Tears? Really?

KARABI

When did you become so terrible?

DARCY

(rushed)

And scene. Alright. I'm going back to my room, I've had enough of this. I'm probably going to get kicked out of college soon anyway, so goodnight and good riddance, ya'll.

Darcy exits. Grayson snuggles himself back into his bed.

GRAYSON

I'm going to bed, too. This is ridiculous.

Leandre drapes an arm around Karabi and leads her back into the

HALLWAY

Leandre is about to duck back into his room.

KARABI

Can you just...

Leandre stalls.

KARABI (cont'd)

Tell me something that will make me feel better.

Leandre sighs.

KARABI (cont'd)

I don't want everything to end like this. I need closure.

LEANDRE

You need something new. Or someone. Night.

(CONTINUED)

Leandre SHUTS the door behind him, leaving Karabi alone in the cold, dark hallway.

She puts her arms around herself and shivers. There's no going back to her and Darcy's room like this.

INT. DORM LOUNGE - NIGHT

Karabi settles onto the couch, the sad balloons from her birthday party still there. She lays down with her hair blocking her face and hugs herself.

MONTAGE - GOING THEIR SEPARATE WAYS

-- Leandre packs up his belongings, stuffing his clothes into a suitcase.

-- Grayson and Audrianna eat lunch together in a dining hall. They hold hands across the table.

-- In Darcy and Karabi's dorm room, an empty manila envelope sits next to Darcy on her bed. Darcy holds a letter of expulsion in one hand and uses her other hand to shield her eyes. She's crying.

-- Leandre walks down the dorm hallway, towing his suitcase in one hand and holding his trumpet case in the other.

-- A chipper Grayson walks into his dorm room to find Leandre's half empty and barren. Grayson's shoulders slump a little bit, but then Audrianna comes in behind him. He hooks an arm around her and leads her inside.

-- Darcy's half of the dorm is packed up. Karabi examines the room. Suddenly, she turns around and exits.

-- Leandre is on a Greyhound bus. He rests his head on the window, eyes closed.

-- Darcy sits in the front seat of her mom's car. Her mom yells at her MOS.

-- Karabi's feet walk up to a sorority house with large Greek letters proudly displayed out front. Her face is determined.



INT. KARABI'S DORM ROOM - AFTERNOON

Karabi THROWS OPEN the door to her dorm room. She holds a slew of informational papers about Greek life in one hand.

She TOSSES the papers onto her desk. She leaps onto her bed with a huff.

On her back, Karabi stares at the ceiling. Her fingers take turns drumming on her stomach.

She brings one fist out in front of her, in the air.

FLASHBACK - INT. HIGH SCHOOL KITCHEN - EVENING

Karabi, Darcy, Grayson, and Leandre stand around the dark, abandoned kitchen in their high school graduation robes. They laugh about something, MOS.

A paper plate of penne noodles is in front of each recent graduate. With a few noodles on each plastic fork they bring the noodles together in the center of a counter.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY - INT. KARABI'S DORM ROOM - AFTERNOON

Karabi shifts her fingers around like she's holding an imaginary fork.

KARABI

Cheers.

FADE OUT



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